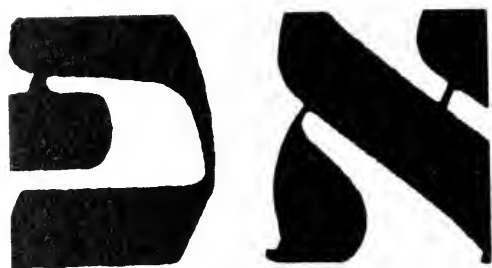


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THE JEWS IN RUSSIA

By E. B. LANIN.

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THE JEWS IN RUSSIA.

"Something is wrong, there needeth change.
But what or where?"

Song of Rabbi Ben Ezra.

In the olden times of the Grand Duchy of Moscow there was no Jewish question to disturb the peace of mind of Russian statesmen: the peaceful Jews were then kept out of the country more successfully than the martial Tartars, more resolutely than the plague. Every Jew found there was seized and expelled,¹ no reason, however weighty, being accepted as sufficient to justify the pollution of the land by the presence of a member of the race that crucified the Saviour. And thus the native population were left to their own devices—the stream of Russian civilisation kept exceptionally pure from Jewish admixture—until the policy of annexation was first fairly inaugurated, when Russia ravenously swallowed, along with the luscious morsels that belonged to her neighbours, the trichines that found such a congenial soil in her body politic and are now bidding fair to bring about a collapse of the entire system. The struggles of Russia now to throw off, now to assimilate and neutralise this dangerous element, are instructive if not edifying.

Little Russia was the first territory annexed, and with it were taken over the Jews who for generations had been wont to look upon that country as their fatherland. But if the Little Russians, who had been induced to unite by tempting promises, were treated with scant ceremony, the Jews could scarcely complain of receiving still less, and in 1727 the High Privy Council promulgated an order signed by the Empress Catherine I., to expel the "scurvy Jews,"² male and female, who are living in Ukraine (Little Russia) and in Russian cities generally, and never again to allow them under any pretext to re-enter the country, and to take due care that in future the land be vigilantly guarded and kept free from them." But as the frontier, even in those days, was extensive, its guardians venal, and the Jews persevering and ingenious, many of the latter succeeded in maintaining their foothold without sacrificing their religion. Peter II., the gentleness of whose character reflected itself in the irreso-

(1) Cf. Complete Code of Laws, No. 662, year 1676. In a treaty concluded with Poland in 1678 it was expressly stipulated that "the merchants and tradesmen of both sides will be free to travel without hindrance into each other's country 'except the Jews.'"—*Ibid.*, No. F30.

(2) There is no adjective in the original, but the word for Jews is an opprobrious one implying still more than is expressed by the epithet I have added. The same word is still employed by such conservative organs of the Russian press as the semi-official *Novoye Vremya* and *Grashdanin*.

lution of his policy, relaxed the severity of this law to the extent of allowing Jews to visit South Russia for the purpose of attending the fairs there; a privilege which he thoughtfully saddled with the condition "that they should not take out of the country gold or silver money, nor even copper coins." "As to living in Little Russia," this curious ukase concludes, "it is strictly forbidden, nor shall any one dare to harbour scurvy Jews; in all these respects it is decreed that the ukase of the year 1727 shall remain in force."¹

The Empress Anna, in the beginning of her reign, gave permission to Jews to visit Russia for purposes of commerce, but shortly before her death, repenting of that and other sins, reverted to the old policy of exclusion, which, however, was again for a time suspended during the Russo-Turkish war. In 1742, the Empress Elizabeth framed still more stringent laws against the Jews than any of her predecessors, and piously appealed to heaven for her warrant. "Except irremediable harm to our faithful subjects nothing can ever come of the presence in the land of such inveterate haters of the name of Christ the Saviour."²

Catherine II., whose policy was as little guided by her philosophy as were the metaphysics of many venturesome old schoolmen by their religious faith, began by following in the steps of her predecessors, and in the manifesto she issued during the earlier part of her reign inviting foreigners to come and settle in Russia, in consideration of special privileges offered them, Jews were expressly mentioned as disqualified. But the annexation of certain Polish governments, inhabited by large numbers of Jews, which she soon afterwards effected, compelled her to modify a policy that was based upon changing interest rather than fixed principle; and in the year 1769 she permitted the Jews to make Russia their home, on condition that they settled exclusively in the south, in the government of New Russia. This decree³ was the foundation-stone of the famous *Pale of Settlement*, which remains to the present day the main grievance of the Jews—the fruitful source of all their sufferings. All followers of the Mosaic law who inhabited the Polish provinces at the time of their annexation were allowed to remain where they were, and to enjoy the same rights as Russians; but it was not open to them to circulate in Russia proper, and towards the close of the Empress's reign they were condemned to pay double taxes.⁴

But all these attempts of Russia to kick against the pricks proved ineffectual. The Jews obeyed the laws of nature rather than those of shortsighted men, with results that alarmed the statesmen who were

(1) Complete Code of Laws, No. 5324

(2) *Ibid.*, No. 8673.

(3) Complete Coll. of Laws, No. 13383.

4 *Ibid.*, No. 17224.

responsible for having made the two incompatible. An Imperial Commission was then created (1802), by the Emperor Alexander surnamed the Blessed, to study the question, and two years later a law was passed which appears to have been an honest endeavour to carry out two opposite lines of policy, on the principle of doing incompatible things by halves. One half of the measures are intended to protect the Christians against the heartless exploitation of the Jews, who are thus treated as born enemies of their Orthodox fellow subjects, while the other half is meant to bring about the brotherly union and ultimate amalgamation of the two avowedly hostile races. Very sordid motives were put before them to induce them to become Christians, care being meanwhile taken to keep them well within their Pale of Settlement, which was considerably narrowed, no Jew being allowed to live within fifty versts of the frontiers. It was obviously legislation of the half-hearted kind—an attempt (to use a popular Russian expression) to give the wolves a feed and keep the sheep whole, and like all such efforts it deservedly failed.

The Emperor Nicholas began his reign by issuing various ukases in the same spirit—forbidding the Jews to circulate in Russia, narrowing the Pale still more by excluding from it the cities of Kieff, Nicolaïeff, Sebastopol, and even certain of the streets of Vilna, and generally carrying out a policy of mild repression. On its becoming obvious in 1835 that most of these measures were but mere waste paper, the whole structure of previous legislation was pulled down and a bill passed “to enable Jews to live comfortably as tillers of the soil or artisans, and to keep them from idleness and illegal occupations.” They are permitted by this law to attend fairs in the great centres of Russia—Nischny Novgorod, Irbitzk, Kharkoff, &c.—and special privileges are promised to those who turn their attention to the cultivation of the soil, an occupation which had proved so fatal to Russian Christians. The legislator was evidently desirous on the one hand of removing all distinctions between Jews and Christians, and on the other of localising the religion of the former as he would an infectious disease. Evidence of the former disposition is to be found in the clauses which throw open schools, gymnasies, universities, and other educational establishments to the members of the proscribed faith, and proof of the latter in the express declaration that in country districts the Jews were, as theretofore, to remain aloof from their Christian fellow-subjects, their communes to be separated from those of Orthodox Christians; and even in the cities the same barriers and distinctions to be rigorously maintained. Worse than all, as soon as it became evident that the proscribed people thoroughly appreciated the offer of education, by sending their children to Christian schools, where they became the most successful pupils and students, the Emperor issued another

ukase (in 1844) to the Minister of Public Instruction, declaring it necessary to open Jewish schools for Jewish children, and ordering him to appoint a commission of rabbis to draft a scheme and to see that a special tax be levied on the Jews for the support of these denominational establishments.

The late Czar Alexander II. was desirous of contributing as far as was possible, by means of legislation, to the assimilation of the Jewish element by the Christian population, but before taking any steps towards the accomplishment of this desire, he ordered the Minister of the Interior to have detailed reports drawn up by the governors and governors-general of the districts inhabited by Jews concerning the working of the laws already in force and the defects remarked in their conception or administration. The Governors of the provinces of Vitebsk, Mohileff, and Minsk gave it as their opinion that the Jews of their districts were suffering incalculable harm from the action of the law depriving them of the rights of ordinary Russian subjects without relieving them of any of the corresponding obligations. Moreover, the towns, they added, in which Jews were authorised to live were so congested that they could get but little work to do; and "when they do receive orders for work, they are compelled to have recourse to fraud. This explains why they so often become noxious members of society, instead of conferring upon the community and upon themselves those benefits which, under more favourable conditions, one would naturally expect from them." The Governor of Poltava informed the Minister that the Jews of the south of Russia differed to a very considerable extent in language, dress, and mode of life from their co-religionists in other parts of the empire, and that the difference was entirely to their advantage. As a result of this, "they have almost wholly assimilated themselves with the native population; wherefore I would respectfully suggest that all the restrictions now in force against them be forthwith abolished." The remaining governors were of the same opinion, and the Minister of the Interior came to the conclusion that the accumulation of skilled Jewish artisans and workmen in the cities of the Pale of Settlement, and the competition resulting between themselves on the one hand and between them and the Christians on the other, "have an exceedingly injurious effect on both sides."

Nothing could be more candid than this avowal, nothing more well meaning than the intentions it called into being; but between intentions and their realisation lies an abyss—at times an impassable one. "Before the sun rises," says a Little Russian proverb, "the dew may eat one's eyes out." Half-hearted measures of relief were gradually doled out, certain restrictions abolished wholly or in part, and the administration of the existing laws became less severe, a

difference which was, in itself, as long as it lasted, almost as welcome as a repeal of the exclusive legislation complained of. For men, not measures, really rule or ruin the nation: no other country possessing such a ponderous, voluminous collection of laws as the Empire of the Tsars, no other people so utterly lacking the conception of law, as of established rules to be respected and obeyed; and what can be more demoralising to a nation than the possession of laws, the transgression of which is the rule, the observance the rare exception?

Had the Emperor Alexander II. lived a year or two longer, it is highly probable that there would now no longer be a Jewish question in Russia; for the emancipation of that people was one of the points of the constitution which he had consented to grant. His son and successor is credited with a strong personal dislike to all followers of the Mosaic law, and is resolved, men say, to grind them down to the intellectual (they are already far below the economic) level of his Orthodox subjects. As this would be a heinous crime, it may possibly be a foul-mouthed calumny; but it is not a dispassionate survey of the main acts of his reign that would bring one to doubt the truth of the assertion. The chief measure now in force against the Jews is—and has been since the days of Catherine II.—the prohibition to leave the Pale of Settlement. No doubt this district is immense in extent, comprising the governments of Vilna, Volhynia, Grodno, Kovno, Minsk, Podolsk, Yekaterinoslav, Poltava, Tshernigoff and, under certain restrictions, portions of Kieff, Vitebsk, and Mohileff.¹ But for the Jews, who are not tillers of the soil, who are compelled to belong to merchant guilds or trade corporations that exist only in cities and towns, and are debarred from engaging in many pursuits open to Christians, the immensity of this territory shrinks to an incredible extent. And lest the Pale, even thus narrowly circumscribed, should seem too vast a hunting-ground for the “scurvy Jew,” his Majesty enacted, two years ago, that “until further orders,” no Jew will be permitted to leave the villages or hamlets in which they were living up to the 15th May, 1882. And as during those six years hundreds, nay thousands, of families changed their place of residence to other villages and towns, the execution of this law has reduced a large number of Jews to misery and ruin; for not only do those suffer who are compelled to leave villages where they have their houses and their capital, but the community to which they are compelled to return, and in which competition has already reduced wages to the starvation line. So that the arena is in reality very circumscribed in which Jew meets Jew in the bitter struggle for life, and defeating his adversary inflicts incurable wounds upon himself.

¹ Cf. Law concerning Passports and Runaways, vol. xiv., division i., chap. i., art. 16.

There are one or two narrow and winding paths that lead out of this human penfold, but those who take them have often cause bitterly to regret their enterprise or unrest. Jews who have traded for not less than five years as members of the first merchant guild¹ within the Pale have the right to apply for admission to the same guild outside of it. But the exercise of this right bristles with difficulties. Thus, to say nothing of the petitions which he must send to the guilds, the police, the governors, and others, the merchant's first real embarrassment is caused by the law which prohibits him from hiring Christian servants, coupled with the circumstance that he has no hope of finding any in Russia proper, where Jews are few and belong exclusively to the privileged classes from which the ranks of domestic servants are never recruited. The law² which obtained under former Emperors allowed the merchant in this case to petition the Prefect of the Police of St. Petersburg or the Governor-general of Moscow—if his destination were either of these cities—for permission to take with him from the Pale a certain number of clerks and domestic servants, setting forth in the petition the reasons that determined him to fix the particular number asked for. It then depended on the decision of these dignitaries how many might accompany him, and from their decision there was no appeal. If he chose some other city for his abode, he was allowed but one clerk and four domestic servants, all of whom must be of irreproachable character and free, not only from the accusation, but even from the suspicion of crime. It is as easy to imagine the innumerable and serious embarrassments that this law is calculated to raise up in the everyday life of the Jewish merchant—the loss of time, of money, of health—as it is difficult to divine the good purpose which the legislator had in view in framing it. That law is still in force; but, apprehensive that the permission it accords is far too extensive, his present Majesty's advisers have decreed that in case the merchant should dismiss or otherwise lose his servants, it shall not be open to him to send to the Pale for others to replace them, but he must shift as best he can.³ Moreover, if from any cause whatever he cease to belong to the first guild before the lapse of ten years, he forfeits his right to reside in Russia and must return to the Pale. The circumstance that he availed himself during his stay of his legal right to purchase house property or land in Russia proper, is not deemed

(1) In Russia there are two merchant guilds (there were three till a few years ago): the members of the first pay much higher fees than those of the second, and both pay larger fees and taxes than the petty traders. One must be a man of considerable means to belong to the first merchant guild in St. Petersburg or Moscow. In the latter city there are but four hundred members of the first guild all told, many of whom are foreigners.

(2) Vol. xiv., div. i., chap. i., art. 16.

(3) Decision of Minister of Interior and Minister of Finances, given on 17—29 April, 1885.

sufficiently grave to cause an exception to be made in his favour. Landlord or householder, it matters not, the law compels him to leave everything and return to the Pale, and logic and humanity are utterly powerless to help him.¹

In Russia every Jew is compelled to belong to one of the established classes into which the tax-paying community is divided, and unless he have been received into one of the learned professions, he must be at all times ready to prove by documents, that require to be renewed every year, that he is a skilled artisan, a merchant of one of the two guilds, a petty trader, or an agriculturist. This means, besides endless worry and frequent insults from secretaries and petty puffed-up officials, the payment of considerable annual fees and—what is sometimes more irksome and oppressive—permanent residence in the city or town in which his guild or corporation has its headquarters.² If sheer want and the evident hopelessness of relieving it in a given town compel a Jew to disregard this law and wander about from place to place, as many have done and still are forced to do, he is arrested and treated or maltreated as that most miserable of human wretches, a Russian *brodyag*.³

But, independently of those general taxes paid by Jews for the support of institutions from the benefits of which they are in most cases expressly excluded, they are also subjected to a special system of taxation, from which Christians are exempt, and which, though destined in theory for the special needs of the Jewish community, are nevertheless employed in part to replenish the imperial coffers.⁴ Thus the so-called “Box tax”⁵ is one of the most comprehensive tributes ever levied upon a community, its oppressiveness being intensified by the odious method practised of farming it out to greedy speculators. For every animal, fowl, and bird killed for food according to Jewish rites (Kosher) a fixed sum has to be paid. And on every pound of that same meat, and on every one of those identical fowls, an additional sum is levied when they are sold. Jews who have taken their degrees in universities, or have succeeded in gaining admission to a learned profession, may, on satisfying their butcher that they are doctors or masters, purchase a certain quantity of animal food free of this duty: viz., two pounds and a half of meat a day, if the privileged person is single, and four pounds and a half if married; he may also, if a bachelor, purchase

(1) Cf. Complete Collection of Laws, No. 41779 and 48175.

(2) Complete Collection of Laws, vol. xiv. div. i., chap. i., arts. 1 and 2.

(3) This terrible word *brodyag* does not convey much to the ordinary English reader. Those who are curious to know something of the indescribable tortures inflicted on this army of unpitied wretches will find some facts relating to the subject in *The Fortnightly Review*, July, 1890, in the article on “Russian Prisons.” Cf. Complete Collection of Laws, vol. ix., art. 953.

(4) Complete Collection of Laws, vol. v., art. 281; Supplement, chap. i., art. 1.

(5) So called because the proceeds were kept in a box employed solely for this purpose.

on the same advantageous conditions one fowl or bird daily, and two if he be a family man.¹ In addition to this there is a candle tax, the proceeds of which are employed to support those denominational schools with which the Jews would most gladly dispense, if they were allowed to avail themselves of the ordinary educational establishments, to which they have quite as much right as their Christian fellow-subjects. Over and above these oppressive tributes, all Jews have to pay a certain percentage—from which Christians are, of course, exempt—on the rent they receive for their houses, shops, stores, granaries; on the gross income they receive from the sale of wine in public-houses and inns; they are likewise subject to a special annual tax on distilleries and breweries, glass works, copper and iron works, tar, pitch, and tallow works, and for the permission to set up as cattle-breeders. In addition to this, all money left by deceased Jews pays a fixed percentage to the same common fund; and finally a fine is paid for the authorisation to wear Hebrew apparel. “All Jews who desire to wear a skull cap” (I am quoting textually from the Statute book), “are hereby subjected to a permanent tax of neither more nor less (*sic*!) than five silver roubles a year each.”² This is not an extract from obsolete laws framed during the Middle Ages, but a clause of a law drawn up in the last quarter of the sober nineteenth century, and strictly enforced to-day. That the legislator was in grim earnest about the matter is evident from the following provision concerning the wearing of other articles of Jewish dress: “In fixing the amount of taxes to be levied for the right of wearing Hebrew dress, male and female, the governor of the district is hereby enjoined to take heed that it be considerably augmented in comparison with the other objects subject to the Box Tax.”³

It is difficult to convey anything like an adequate idea of the vexation, disputes, and bad blood caused by the spirit in which this law is administered. But it is scarcely needful to descant upon the spirit, when the letter itself contains so much to bear out the charge of deliberate injustice which has been frequently advanced against it. Take, for instance, the provision made for the not uncommon case in which the animal or fowl is slaughtered in one place and sold in another. “Whereas the Box-Tax is levied according to weight on the sale of the objects liable to it, be it ordained that if a Jew, having slaughtered an animal within the boundaries of one tax farm, desire to carry it to another for the purpose of selling it, he is liable to pay the tax in the first tax-farming district for the slaughter alone; but the tax farmer of the second district possesses

(1) Supplement to article 281 of fifth vol. of Laws.

(2) *Ibid.*, art 10, observ. 4.

(3) Supplement, chap. iii., art. 14

the right to exact payment both of the tax for slaughter and also of the tax for sale.”¹ This is but a sample. The voluminousness and minuteness—to say nothing of the vexatiousness—of the laws against the Jewish millions who have appreciably contributed economically and intellectually to the prosperity of the Empire, would drive anyone but a Talmudist or a Benedictine to despair.

But besides merchants of the first guild, university graduates of the highest standard, and doctors and masters, are also privileged to pass beyond the Pale of Settlement. Skilled artisans can likewise seek admission to the corporations, or “Tsekhs,” of their respective calling in any part of the empire. This clause enfranchises, to all appearance, a numerous class of men, which might perhaps be made to include the best portion of the Hebrew people. These appearances, which would probably be trustworthy enough if observed in any other part of Europe, are rightly deceptive in Russia, and Englishmen who come in contact with the wan, worn, wizen-faced Russian Jews—like so many Lazaruses risen too late from the dead to live longer than a few short hours—who played such a tragic part in the sweating scandals that came to light in London some time ago, will readily understand that the children of creatures of this stamp—and the majority of Russian Jews are such—have as much chance of becoming astronomers as of qualifying for what the law in Russia understands by “skilled artisans.” It is less difficult, however, for the daughters of the classes who possess a fairly sufficient income to become midwives—a profession which also confers upon those who practise it the right of passing beyond the Pale.² But his present Majesty’s Government, noticing that many young Jewesses succeeded in passing the examinations required for the certificate of midwife, instead of withdrawing the privilege accorded by law to this profession, as would be natural under the circumstances, acted somewhat like the scrupulous Quaker of apocryphal celebrity who, when the pirate caught hold of one of the ship’s ropes in order to board the vessel, exclaimed: “Thou wantest this rope, friend?” (and speedily cutting it) “take it; may it stand thee in good stead”; they confirmed the privilege, but explained that from December, 1885, it would not extend from midwives to the children of such Jewesses, who would be compelled to live in the Pale.³ Another instructive instance of the way in which laws favourable to the Jews can be made oppressive without being formally abolished occurred two years ago in Kieff. A certain M. Goldenberg, who had obtained his degree at the University, and is therefore qualified to live in Russia proper, own houses, and

(1) *Ibid.*, Supplement, art. 45.

(2) Coll. of Laws, vol. xiv., sect. i., chap. iii.

(3) Decision of the Department of the Police on the 30th December, 1885.

land, &c., resolved to hand over to his wife a house that belonged to him in the Sophia Street. The deed of transfer was duly drawn up, but the authorities refused to register it. M. Goldenberg appealed to the law courts, relying upon the express terms of the law (Art. 100, vol. x., parts 1 and 5), which enacts that the husband communicates all his civil rights and privileges to his wife. But the law courts decided that every statute concerning the Jews must be interpreted in a restrictive sense, and consequently they upheld the refusal of the authorities to validate the act of transfer, dismissing the suit with costs, on the ground that, though M. Goldenberg himself possesses civil rights, he does not communicate them to his wife.

The most arduous way of obtaining the right of free circulation throughout the empire would naturally seem that which leads through the universities, or one of the higher educational establishments, for the children of men who can never tell in the morning whether they and their families may not have to go to bed supperless at night. And yet so painfully vivid was the consciousness of the horrors from which they would thus escape, so powerful the aversion to go back to vegetate and rot in the hateful Pale, that hundreds of young men entered the universities, valorously battled for years with want, sickness, and discouragement, many of them like Heyne, the German classical scholar who first raised philology to the dignity of a science, often exchanging their dinner for tallow-candles, which burned during whole nights in their garrets and cellars, lighting them on to knowledge and to fame. And the Government, seeing that knowledge is power, and that it is not good that power should be placed in the hand of "vile Jews," resolved to close up this issue out of misery, ignorance, and the Pale. When the present Czar succeeded to the throne the educational law, in so far as it affected the right of Jews to have their children taught in the ordinary schools of the empire, was formulated as follows: "Jewish children may be admitted into and educated in the State educational establishments, private schools, and boarding schools of the districts in which they reside, no difference whatever being made between them and other children."¹ This law was in force down to the 19th June, 1885, when his Majesty ordered the admission of Jews to the Technological Institute² of Kharkoff to be limited to 10 per cent. of the total number of students. Nine months later his Majesty was "graciously pleased," says the official document, "to forbid absolutely the admission of any Jew to the Veterinary Institute of Kharkoff." On the 17th December, 1886, the present Minister of Public Instruction—an Armenian by birth—promulgated a law the preamble of which

(1) Coll. of Laws, vol. ix., book i., chap. iv., art. 966.

2 There are but two Technological Institutes in all Russia.

declared that whereas very many young Jews, eager to partake of the benefits of higher classical, technical, and professional education, were annually presenting themselves for admission to the universities, &c., passing the examinations and prosecuting their studies in the various establishments of the empire, it was found desirable to put a stop to such an unsatisfactory state of things, to which end it was enacted that in future the number of Jewish students in Russian universities should not exceed 10 per cent. of the entire number of students in the universities within the Pale, 5 per cent. in other provincial universities, and 3 per cent. in those of Moscow and St. Petersburg; and on the 8th July, 1887, the same measure was applied to all gymnasies or grammar schools without exception.

The immediate results of this curious legislation were painful in the extreme; thousands of young men who, by dint of years of hard, steady work and stoic self-denial on their part and on the part of their parents, had at last come within sight of the promised land, were rudely awakened from their day-dreams and jeeringly told to return to their "vile" people to live and die, pariahs among helots. I shall never forget the harrowing scenes I witnessed, the tears, the entreaties, the wailing and despair immediately after the passing of that drastic law: parents begging their Christian friends—ay, and entreating their Christian enemies—to intercede with the minister to except their only child from the operation of the Act; young boys putting on the ill-fitting masks of dissimulation and endeavouring by flattery administered to the sons of high officials—their own schoolfellows—to obtain permission to finish the studies already brilliantly begun or well-nigh ended; orthodox priests, grave Russian officials, and even well-known statesmen gibing and jeering at the checkmated Jew. One of the bitterest and possibly best deserved reproaches which Christian writers administer to Julian the Emperor was the insidiousness of his persecution of the Christians, as manifested in the order he issued prohibiting them from attending lectures in the schools. Julian couched that order in language as elegant and brilliant as that of Lucian, and defended it with arguments worthy of Aristotle—invulnerable to anything more logical than an appeal to a highly-developed sentiment of humanity. The legislators of Holy Russia succeeded in closely copying Julian's insidiousness without imitating his wit or appreciating his logic. My readers do not, I feel confident, need to be told whether the grave legislators of a vast empire engaged in the practical solution of a most delicate question—fate of millions of their subjects—are justified in giving to laws adverse to these millions the odious form of a sneer at their religious tenets. It had been usual in Russia at all times to profess and occasionally to practise respect for the Jewish observance of the Sabbath. Jewish boys were not compelled to attend school on Satur-

days, nor witnesses—if they objected—to take an oath in courts of justice on that day. But since the present Czar ascended the throne all that has been changed. Thus, among the laws concerning the education of Jews we read: “The learned Committee of the Ministry of Public Instruction, having deliberated upon the question whether Jewish pupils of grammar schools should be excused from written examinations on Saturdays, . . . decided that once they enter public educational establishments Jews are bound to submit to the rules thereof, and the *very act of entrance into these schools is of itself a proof that they and their parents have outgrown that exclusiveness which sticks for the strict observance of the Sabbath.*”¹ This jest is the deliberate work of the most learned body of men in the most enlightened department of the Government of Russia—work for which they are paid out of the hard-earned wages of the Jew, at whose religious convictions and moral courage they thus poke fun!

The circumstance that Jewish children seek for education in schools founded for children belonging to all religious persuasions being thus authoritatively construed as a proof that they and their parents laugh in their sleeves at one of the fundamental tenets of their faith, the only course open to parents who objected to the practical consequences of this interpretation was to found schools of their own—a costly solution, it is true, but the only feasible one. Several communities unhesitatingly adopted it and set about availing themselves of the law which conferred this right upon them.² But the Government, informed of their intention, forthwith repealed that law, and declared by a decree of the Minister of Public Instruction that it was no longer advisable to authorise the opening of such schools, inasmuch as the ordinary educational establishments that exist for children of all religious persuasions outside the Pale would also satisfactorily meet the requirements of the Jews.³ The logical outcome of these two legislative acts is therefore that, on the one hand, Jewish parents desirous of having their children instructed must send them to Christian schools, if there happen to be a vacancy there; and on the other hand, their doing so is regarded by the Government as a sort of mild apostasy, in consequence of which they will be no longer treated as strictly orthodox Jews.

Thus foiled and checkmated on every side, small wonder that some of the most ambitious or least steadfast among them brought themselves to purchase such instruction as grammar schools could give them by the formal rejection of all the specially Talmudic doctrines, and the adoption of the faith of the sect of Karaim, who in Russia enjoy privileges that are denied the Talmudists. Thus a

(1) Circular of the Ministry of Public Instruction. No. 15038.

(2) Collection of Laws, vol. ix., sect. i., art. 969, and observations.

(3) Ministerial Circular, No. 7, of the year 1888

number of young men in the Crimea, after much inner struggling and hesitation, resolved to stifle their scruples and take this doubtful course; but they had first to petition the Minister of the Interior (an Atheist, as it chanced) for permission to take the fateful step. They were soon made aware, however, that they were asking for the moon; the heavens and the earth may pass away, but no Russian Jew can ever abjure his faith in order to become a member of the Karaim sect—for a law of Catherine II. forbids it. There was now only one other way to obtain the coveted boon, namely by stealth, and this case has also been thoughtfully provided for by the wise legislator, who decreed that those Jewish parents who, on sending their children to school, neglect to make declaration that they are Jews, will be subjected to exactly the same punishment as if they were convicted of—forgery.¹ This sounds somewhat harsh to Englishmen; it may also seem strange to logicians and legislators of every nation; but the Jews feel that they have reason to be thankful for the leniency that refrained in such cases from treating them as incendiaries or regicides.

The Hebrew people in Russia are characterised by an insatiable thirst for such education as can be had in that country; it would seem to partake of the nature of a passion that grows with their growth, gaining strength from the very opposition it encounters.² The Government, on the other hand, is firmly resolved to starve it out and to thrust the Jews back to ignorance, blind obedience, and the Pale. And this is perfectly natural; if it seems immoral, it is only to those English Russophiles with whom fanaticism is the sole substitute for knowledge, and who damage the cause they would further by judging such acts by a European standard of morality—a mistake which no Russian statesman will ever commit. The reasons that make a dispassionate observer look upon the present persecution of five or six million Jews as natural are not far to seek: they are all comprised in the one principle of self-preservation applied by a people which is standing on a much lower moral and intellectual level than the bulk of Europeans.

An autocracy may at times be quite as good and wise a government as a republic or a constitutional monarchy, and no honest student of history, whatever political opinions he may profess, can withhold his admiration from men like Oliver Cromwell, or even Dr. Francia. But the autocracy of Russia, in which tens of thousands of irresponsible tsarlets devour, like human locusts, all the

(1) Collection of Laws, vol. ix., art. 968.

(2) According to the statistics collected by the Ministry of Public Instruction before the introduction of the measures forbidding Jews to educate their children (1885-6), the percentage of Russian children in the higher educational establishments of the empire was twenty-two in ten thousand, whereas the percentage of Jewish children amounted to forty-eight in ten thousand.

material and moral resources of the people, is a foul stain on modern Europe, which only crime can perpetuate and human blood wash away. The logical correlative of such rulers is an ignorant, broken-spirited, shiftless people; and the rulers are resolved to keep the bulk of Russians ignorant, broken-spirited, and shiftless, on the principle that he who wishes for eggs must put up with the cackling of hens—*qui vult finem vult media*. This is the key to that series of oppressive laws enacted during the past five years, the undisguised object of which is to deprive the masses not only of what is usually termed education, but of all kind of instruction whatever. The results obtained up to the present moment are magnificent or disastrous, according to the angle of vision from which we view them: the bulk of the Russian people are disgustingly servile, incredibly superstitious, hopelessly shiftless and improvident, the natural prey of every passing quack or impostor, and the power of the Tsar is proportionately strengthened.¹ The semi-official journal of the capital describes the Russians as “a people run wild, savage, supine. The judges and crown lawyers of the empire,” it adds, “can testify that *the number of words in use among the Russian peasantry does not exceed from one to two hundred. Even the Kirghee nomads, with their wonderful memory, foresight, imagination, and shiftiness, stand on a far higher level than our Russian peasantry.*”² Over against these

(1) To give a case in point, the *Novoye Vremya*, describing how the Jews of the district of Starokonstantinovsk return to hamlets and villages in which they are forbidden to reside, almost as fast as they are driven out, adds: “The Russian peasantry, instead of assisting the police to expel them, do just the reverse—harbour and screen them from justice, and when interrogated deny that the Jews in question live there, and assert that they have only come on a visit. *A Jew has only to buy a glass of vodka and promise a trifle besides, and for this Russian peasants will, almost without exception, lie when questioned in a court of justice—ay, lie in the most affronting way conceivable, even though, as is often the case, they are giving evidence upon oath.*”—*Novoye Vremya*, 4th April, 1890. None of the conflicting conclusions which can be drawn from this unanswerable and lamentable fact are of good omen for the speedy settlement of the Jewish question in Russia.

(2) *Grashdanin*, 19th January, 1890. Cf. also *Novosti*, 20th January, 1890. An English Russophile organ which might possibly render some services to its Tsar by courageous honesty which it can never effect by mere coarse flattery, *à tort et à travers*, recently alluding to a former paper of this series, the statements of which it completely garbles, seriously puts forward the following argument: If the Russian people are such ignorant, shiftless loons as they are represented to be, they are sorely in need of an autocratic government that will protect them against their own instincts: if they are enlightened, moral, well-behaved, autocracy is likewise the best government for them, for they would otherwise have long ago cried out against its existence. “If the books are in accordance with the teachings of the Koran,” said the fanatic Caliph, of the Alexandrian library, “they are needless, and must be burned: If opposed to the Koran, they are heretical, and must be destroyed forthwith.” The accusation brought against the Russian Government, and demonstrated by unanswerable facts, is that they are *deliberately demoralizing* the wretched people in order to perpetuate the chaotic misrule on which they are thriving. What would any honest, unprejudiced Englishman say to the following candid avowal of the Government’s programme, made by the aristocratic organ subsidized by the Government: “The Russian peasant possesses *great powers of*

"country louts" stand the Jews with wits sharpened by necessity and appetites whetted by gnawing hunger—"like ravenous wolves beside appetising sheep," as an official organ once described them. And the Russian Government is engaged in solving the problem how to keep them together in a state of semi-starvation without a catastrophe. Blinding the wolves is the latest solution that seems to have suggested itself, and, on the principle of self-preservation, why, it may be asked, should Russian statesmen not give it a trial?

Naturally, much more is hereby implied than deprivation of mere lay instruction. The Talmudic religion, whatever else may be said about it, is in itself a course of mental training capable of rendering the mental powers as supple and sharp as would a course of mathematics or of German metaphysics. And as long as a Jew is allowed to remain a Jew he will continue to be infinitely better equipped for the battle of life than the best of his Russian competitors. Hence the natural desire of the more far-seeing among Russian politicians to extirpate Judaism, root and branch; hence the feverish efforts now being made to realise that scheme by employing every known form of injustice and violence that stops short of death.

Every sordid motive that a legislator well versed in this lower branch of his profession could suggest is put before the Jew to induce him to abandon the faith of his forefathers, without replacing it by anything better. Privileges denied his brethren, money and its various equivalents, even the hope of unlawful plunder, have been deliberately relied upon by these champions of Christianity to tempt the Hebrew to please his Emperor by denying his God. Imagine one of those lean, cadaverous caricatures of humanity who crowd the cities of the Pale, and whose existence under the actual circumstances is a stronger argument against Russian Christianity than any that could be drawn from the writings of Strauss or Huxley; and suppose that accident or design puts it in his power to defraud a wealthy co-religionist, by abuse of confidence, fraud, or downright robbery. He succumbs to the temptation, beggars his brother, and immediately becomes a member of the Orthodox Church, as a sort of corollary. His victim prosecutes him and summons a cloud of credible, respectable witnesses who can prove the charge to the satisfaction of the most sceptical. He, on his side, suborns two or three abandoned Christian wretches, whose life is one coarse libel on Christianity. The case comes on for trial, and the Russian courts, guided by Article 330 of the Tenth Volume of Laws, will refuse to allow the

endurance and remarkable patience. And these, in sum, are the qualities of the Russian which should form the basis of the relations of persons in authority to the peasants; and it must be admitted that the authorities have to deal with a soil very favourable if it is only ploughed and harrowed intelligently."—*Grashdanin*, 2nd January, 1890. If this be not *Macchiavellism*, its defence in an English periodical is disinterested love of the good, the beautiful, and the true.

Jewish witnesses to depose against the defendant, because they are naturally supposed to bear a grudge against an apostate; and the light-hearted perjury of the Orthodox Christians (which costs, as we have seen, but a small measure of *rodka*) sets the seal of legality on crimes that would send their author into penal servitude in England. Of course, there is one way out of the difficulty: the plaintiff may go to work and bribe his witnesses to commit perjury too, *i.e.*, to embrace Christianity, which they hate, and then their testimony will be received with credence and respect. For when a Jew finds the truth, supposing that truth to be the "orthodox" faith, he is caressed and made much of for the time being; the law requires "that he be baptised only in a city church, and on a Sunday or festival, and with all possible pomp and ceremony."¹ If he be married he must either divorce his wife or compel her too to subordinate her religious convictions to her conjugal affection; and if she refuses to become a Christian, neither herself *nor* her Christian husband will be permitted to leave the Pale.² Finally, in order to contribute to the sacredness of the family, which, Russians complain, is lacking among the Jews, the new laws give a Jewish boy or girl the right and the encouragement to abandon the faith of his fathers without consulting his parents.³ The difficulties thrown in the way of opening synagogues and prayer-houses are as numerous and as prohibitive as those which have been so effectually opposed to opening of schools, and the Rabbis of those that already exist are harassed and persecuted till they resign or go over to the enemy. In one place the ministry refuses to confirm the election of a respected Rabbi, conducted in strict accordance with all the laws and regulations, simply because, penetrated with a deep sense of his moral responsibility, he refuses to prostitute a religious office to the desires of political Chauvinists, and they unceremoniously put in his place an upstart who was not disliked only by those who did not know him. The Jews of Yekaterinburg, who had lived there for generations, summoned up courage once to ask permission to have, not a synagogue, but merely a house of prayer.⁴ The Government, in

(1) Supplement to article 76 (section 5).

(2) Complete Coll. of Laws, vol. x., part i., art. 81.

(3) *Ibid.*, section 3.

(4) The abject fear which the Jews have of displeasing the authorities exceeds belief. Take, for instance, a man in the position of Baron Ginsburg, of St. Petersburg, a millionaire and a baron of the Russian empire, who might well venture to undertake much that is forbidden to his poorer brethren; and yet he is mortally afraid of saying, or doing, or leaving unsaid and undone anything that might possibly offend even a petty Russian official. He dares not speak even in favour of the Russian Government, lest that should seem an attempt on his part to patronize; and he would as soon cut his tongue out as say a word against it. A few years ago he caused all the Russian laws concerning the Jews to be printed in one volume at his expense; but when the work was done he reflected that his motives might be misinterpreted, so he withdrew it from circulation: and no entreaties on the part of his own intimate friends

reply, very quickly discovered a long-forgotten ukase, which absolutely forbids Jews to reside in that city, or in any part of the Ural, and they are now about to be dragged thousands of miles to the Pale, which many of them have never seen before. In the village of Kakhovka the Hebrew community was lately summoned to appear before the new police superintendent, who at once informed them that he had orders to close up and seal their prayer-house, and to bring them up to trial for having four years ago opened one, "and for having frequently prayed therein," without being authorised to do so by the Government.

These are some of the measures which have driven thousands of Jews to apostatise; and one reads very frequently in the Russian newspapers of "sixty young Jews who, desirous of entering the university, have abjured the Law of Moses"; of forty others who became Christians because their business called them outside of the Pale, and scores of others who for equally valid reasons are introduced every month into the true fold, where they are as much in their place as eagles in a barnyard. Any one of the measures employed against the Jews would be enough to "convert" three-fourths of the Christians of Russia to Shamanism or Bouddism in a week; and the circumstance that about six million persecuted and miserable wretches remain steadfastly faithful to a religion that causes their life to be changed into a fiery furnace without the angel to keep it cool, is the nearest approach to a grandiose miracle that has been vouchsafed to this unbelieving generation. The Orthodox Church cannot be congratulated on these wedding guests whom it is daily picking up in the highways and byways, and bidding, or rather driving, into the spiritual banqueting hall. Not only is one prepared for the discovery that they are not provided with the indispensable wedding garment, but one cannot affect surprise to learn that such raiment as they have is swarming with disease germs which will do dire execution on the assembled guests. I have conversed with numbers of "converted" Jews of all classes of society, and I can affirm that, with few exceptions, not only have they not the faintest glimmer of faith in Christianity, but they hate the very name, despise its priests, sneer at its ceremonies, and loathe themselves for perjuring their souls by receiving its sacraments and praising the name of its founder. And they bring up their sons and daughters in the same sentiments. I know a respectable family in Moscow, the father of which was "converted" like thousands of his co-religionists, and I can answer for it that not one of his sons or daughters had a shred of belief in God or devil, their religious faith

could persuade him to give away one of the thousands of copies that were lying on the shelves of his library. In Odessa, where the governor is Judophobe and something more, a Jew will soon be afraid to sneeze in the street.

being summed up in the one conviction that the Orthodox Church is deserving of the intense hatred of every honest man and woman, and that no opportunity should ever be missed of contributing to its ruin.

Some of these "converts" repent of what they have done, secretly do penance for their sin, and return to the synagogue. But their sighs and tears are as unavailing as those of their forefathers who, sitting down by the waters of Babylon, wept as they remembered Sion; no Rabbi would dare give them help or advice, much less admission to the community; he would forfeit his position if he did. One of these poor wretches, Fichtenstein by name, a venerable old man of sixty, was induced in a moment of weakness to "embrace Christianity," for which he afterwards did penance, literally in sack-cloth and ashes. He visited the synagogue as often as he could, where his fervent, tearful prayers attracted the attention of the congregation. The authorities set a watch on his movements, acquired the conviction that he did really pray in the Jewish place of worship, and had him straightway arrested and sent for trial. The example of these men, it is complained, does not tend to raise the moral level of the Russian Church; "they scatter the seeds of infidelity and insubordination—religious, political, and social—broadcast throughout the country," say the astonished spiritual and civil authorities, "and the harm thus done is incalculable." Harm it may be; incalculable, however, it certainly is not. The Jews may all of them in time be brought to "embrace Russian Christianity," as the Moorish chieftain Almanzor embraced his Christian enemies; and in both cases the embrace is pestilential, deadly.

But the written laws against the Jews, severe as they undoubtedly are, can give no idea of the actual amount and kind of suffering inflicted on this unfortunate people by those who administer them, and from whose interpretation and conduct there lies no appeal. Not only must one take into consideration the kind of whip with which they are beaten, but likewise the arm that wields it; and in this case it is the sinewy, bloody arm that knouted so many Christians to death. For some officials the Jews exist as a fertile source of revenue—a godsend to be grateful for—the bribes they are compelled annually to pay exceeding by a large amount the total of their double annual taxes. This state of things reminds one of our own Henry III pledging all the Jews of his kingdom to his brother for the loan of a considerable sum of money, authorising him in return to keep them in his power until they paid the debt to the last farthing. Russia's solution of the Jewish problem has not advanced beyond that stage yet. Here is what one of the most trustworthy and impartial newspapers of Russia has to say on the subject:—

"The restrictions laid upon the Jews serve in reality as an unfailing and inexhaustible source of income to the authorities charged with their execution ; all those Jews whose rights are more or less doubtful manage to get them changed into undoubted rights by the payment of uninterrupted blackmail ; *battues* and domiciliary visits, which assume the most improbable forms, also wind up with a money tribute. Thus on a dark night, when profound silence reigns everywhere—usually a Friday night is chosen, when every Jew is at home—suddenly the Jewish quarter of the city is surrounded by a cordon, and a great multitude of people, men, women, and children, old men—nay, often even the sick—are arrested and packed off to the police station ; here, for lack of room, they are kept all night in the courtyard in the open air, no matter how severe the cold may be, no matter how inclement the weather. These are facts."¹

And facts, I may add, that are related not of last century, nor last year, but last winter.

This hunting of Jews who are living where they have no right to reside, whose passports have expired, who have transacted some business which their faith disqualifies them from transacting, or who are working hard to keep body and soul together in a position which they are not allowed to occupy, has now become an everyday occurrence, that no longer excites surprise and seldom even evokes compassion. The newspapers chronicle these things with as perfect indifference as a huxter's change of residence. "The authorities have ordered the assistant notaries who belong to the Hebrew persuasion to be immediately dismissed from their situations in Kovno," says the *Warsaw Courier*, and people read and pass on phlegmatically to the next item of intelligence. "M. Akimoff, the President of the Divisional Court," says another paper, "has informed all notaries that they must dismiss their clerks who are members of the Jewish communion, and fill up their places with Russians."² And people yawn and read on.

The suffering inflicted by this wholesale proscription of the Jews is intensified a hundred-fold by the wantonly savage manner in which it is carried out, the victims being treated in many cases exactly as if, instead of human beings, they were brute beasts, who might be chased without impropriety in the fields and highways, and tied up in an outhouse, when caught, till they could be conveniently whipped or physicked. The following incident will illustrate my meaning : A considerable number of Jews repair every year from various parts of Russia to the Liñan in Odessa, to test the medicinal virtue of the waters, which are strongly recommended by Russian doctors in cases of rheumatism, gout, scrofula, skin diseases, paralysis, &c. Numerous petitions, stamped with revenue stamps, certificates, and documents of all kinds have to be drawn up, presented, and verified before a Jew can receive his double passport and permission to pass a few weeks at the waters of the Liñan. And when

(1) *The Week* (Nedaylya), 7th September, 1890.

(2) *Odessa News*, October, 1886.

he has passed through this wearisome and expensive ordeal and has begun the cure, he is not even then free from persecution. He or she may, at any time of the day or night, be pounced upon by the police, snatched up, ladies as well as men, and ignominiously subjected to a medical examination and pronounced impostors who are at the waters under false pretences, having none of the disorders which the latter are supposed to cure. No farther back than the month of July, the Jewish ladies and gentlemen who were using the waters of the Andreïeff Liman in Odessa, were thus unceremoniously arrested one day—night is usually the favourite time for arrests, domiciliary visits, &c., in Russia—and marched off to the city doctor, who was commanded to examine them thoroughly, and to find out whether they were really suffering from the diseases for which they were being treated, or had merely come for their pleasure! It is no easy matter even for a physician to decide in the twinkling of an eye, so to say, whether a man has or has not rheumatism, gout, tic, scrofula, &c., &c. The Odessa doctor, however, knew exactly what was required of him, and justified the confidence with which he was honoured: he declared that two-thirds of the entire number of Jews were in good health and had no need of the Liman waters. Even if this were demonstrably true, the services of these persons might be desirable or even indispensable to their invalid relatives, and on this ground their presence might have been tolerated; but the authorities sent them home at once.¹

It is no light matter for the Jews, who, after all, are mere human beings, to make a stand against a powerful government which is mobilizing its numerous army of officials, employing all its pecuniary resources, and all the ingenuity of human hate to crush them out of existence. Still they cannot—on the whole—be accused of not doing their best to dispute every inch of ground, of not struggling for some few of the rights of men, when possible, on a strictly legal basis. No losing game—with stakes so high—was ever yet played with such unfaltering spirit. No fox hotly pursued by eager hounds and joyful huntsmen ever employed more profound cunning, more suppleness, more talent for adapting, on the spur of the moment, all the rapidly changing circumstances of time, place, and persons to the main end in view, than the Jews. The tragi-comic element that results from this pitting of intellect against brute force, the adventures, curious escapes, the plots and counterplots, would, if properly treated, make a most entertaining volume—but entertaining as were the jokes and puns and witty remarks made at the gladiator fights in Rome, and which drew their point from their contrast to the human being grimly fighting on the threshold of eternity, to prolong for a few minutes the brutal pleasure of a jaded rabble.

(1) *Novoye Vremya*, 23rd July, 1890.

The laws that regulate the military service of the Jews are characterised by their Draconian severity. Most of the alleviations and privileges accorded to Christians, and which tend so visibly to promote good feeling between the men and their superiors, are inexorably denied them, and the hardships inseparable from life in the barracks, with its long winter night-watches and exhausting summer manœuvres, are needlessly made unendurable to the soldier who keeps holy the Sabbath. A Jew can never become an officer as a Christian can—nay, as even a Mohammedan can, who is not disqualified from the highest position in the military hierarchy, filling offices of trust and responsibility. This is a remarkable—it seems an unjust—restriction; but the Jew, hardened by use and want, is prepared for it. But why go still further and allow every soldier who calls himself a Christian, a Mohammedan, or a Buddhist to lord it over him, and not only hector and bully, but assault him with absolute impunity, sometimes with direct approbation? The paralysing fear of encountering these untold miseries of soldier life, from which the only escape is suicide, accounts for the deep-rooted aversion which many Jews manifest to don the livery of the Czar, and the desperate attempts they make to escape from serving in the army. Hundreds of mothers secretly leave their native places before the birth of their children, which, when the children are boys, they refuse to register, thus placing their innocent offspring, almost from the moment of its birth, in a position bristling with still greater difficulties, with more terrible hardships than the one they so greatly dread.¹

It is impossible for a Jew to do anything in a simple, straightforward manner. He could not even if he would; he sets to work to carry out the most commonplace and lawful business transaction just as if his negotiations were but a blind to mask some hidden design, the nature of which you have no means of guessing—it may be to rob you, it may be to murder you. All his dealings are fenced and hedged round with so many provisos and conditions and contingent obligations, that a very experienced lawyer would have no light task if he were set to unravel the web. The following is a very typical instance of the trouble taken by Jews to wrest to their own benefit one of the laws framed for their ruin. Intending to conclude a business arrangement, whatever its nature may be, the validity of which may hereafter be called in question by the other party to the contract, a Jew first makes a pretence of lending him some costly furniture or delivering valuable goods—which he himself

(1) "My attention was drawn to the strange fact of the virtual cessation of male births among the Jews, as if by common accord all Jewish women had resolved to put an end to the tribe of Israel. From private sources, however, I learned that things were pretty much as they had always been, . . . but that the far-seeing, provident parents refused to register their births, in order to free them from the necessity, many years thence, of serving in the army."—*The Vilna Messenger*, 11th December, 1887.

never had to give or lend—and then sues him for the value. The case comes on for trial (the Russian law courts are literally clogged with such fictitious lawsuits, which prevent the hearing of really important actions); both parties are heard with all the conscious seriousness and dignified leisure which befits a Russian judge. The defendant seems to make a determined stand, but loses his case and is condemned to pay the sum demanded. Now this is exactly the sum that would represent the plaintiff's loss, *if* at any future time the defendant should call in question the validity of the contract which they *have not yet concluded*. He would then claim a writ of execution to recover the sum adjudged him by the court.¹

Formerly a Jew could lend money on landed securities. Now this is absolutely forbidden; so, before advancing the sum demanded, he requires the borrower to give him a note of hand for the capital and the interest combined, he next sues him for the amount, and when judgment is given in his favour, advances the sum of money required. Or, suppose a merchant or petty trader has business in some town or city which his quality of Jew precludes him from visiting. If he petitions the authorities to allow him to go there and spend a week or a fortnight, he is insulted for his pains. Instead of this, however, two of his friends or dependents quarrel and summon him to give evidence before the local magistrate, which he does; but one of the parties appeals to the higher court, which sits in the city he is so desirous of visiting, and he is again called upon to give evidence, this time on oath. This also he does, if it is a criminal prosecution, as it probably would be, at the cost of the crown. One of the litigants is perhaps condemned, but the prosecutor thereupon generously forgives him, and all parties are satisfied. The law courts of the west of Russia are positively brought to a standstill by the overwhelming number of fictitious actions of this kind entered by Jews, who thus compel the imperial judges to spend their time and labour and the resources of the State in assisting the Jewish community to evade the very laws which they are sworn to administer.² A more ludicrous sight was never witnessed in the law courts of modern times. "Lately the local authorities," a Kieff journal announces,

"set about verifying the right of the Jews in Shmerinka to reside there. Many of them were living in little huts of their own. Before the verification took place, however, many of the resident Hebrews deemed it advisable to flee. There are several hundred Jewish houses there, the majority of which were erected, like the palaces of the fairy tales, by night. The work was done in the

(1) *Noroye Vremya*, 24th December, 1889. These artifices are rendered possible by the important circumstance that in Russia law is not costly, and a man can and generally does conduct his own case, even if he is unable to read or write.

(2) *Noroye Vremya*, 24th December, 1889.

daytime in bits and scraps, at some distance from the city, and when ready the complete house would be drawn by twenty or thirty pairs of oxen, and set up in the place destined for it. For convenience' sake these houses were made to move about on wheels."¹

The poverty of the greater part of the six million Jews who are caged up in the few plague-stricken towns and villages of the Pale surpasses that which excited such a cry of horror in London when the sweating system and its results were dragged into the light of day. The late Minister of Finances, Rutenberg, declared candidly in a memoir to the Emperor, that "the poverty in which the Jews live is extreme, and the extraordinary demoralisation of the Hebrew race in Russia is mainly the outcome of the extremely unfavourable conditions in which they are placed for gaining a livelihood."² The amount of taxes which they owe is enormous.³ It was shown by the census that whereas the average proportion of Christians to the total number of houses owned by Christians in the governments of the Pale, is between 410 and 510 persons to one house, the average number of Jews is 1,229.⁴ In most parts of the Pale, they are cooped up like insects or animals rather than men. In Berditscheff, the official statistician tells us

"the Jews are huddled together more like salted herrings than human beings; tens of thousands of them are devoid of any constant means of subsistence, living from hand to mouth; several families are often crowded into one or two rooms of a dilapidated hut, so that at night there is absolutely no space whatever between the sleepers. . . . The lodgers turn these rooms into workshops in the daytime, refining wax therein, making tallow candles, tanning leather, &c.; here whole families live, work, sleep and eat together, in that fetid atmosphere, with their tools and materials lying around on all sides."⁵

The *Moscow Gazette*, describing the state of the Jews in Berditscheff says:

"The streets of the Jewish quarter of the town are not more than four feet wide; on either side of them the tumble-down old houses seem ready to fall to pieces; children are lying before the houses on the street in a state of almost complete nudity, wallowing in the slough, and among them numbers of slovenly women—the mothers of the children—also stretched out sideways and lengthways on the street, sleeping under the rays of the burning sun."

The statistician, M. Bobrovski, writing on the condition of the Jews in the government of Grodno, says:

"By far the greater part of the Jewish population are poor and are always engrossed by the one care: how to get their daily bread. Burdened with numerous families, the crowded state in which they live surpasses anything one can conceive as possible. Frequently one hut consisting of three or at

(1) Cf. also *Noroye Vremya*, 10th January, 1890.

(2) Cf. Complete Collection of Laws, vol. xl., 42264.

(3) *Noroye Vremya*, 10th January, 1890.

(4) Shooravski Statist., *Description of the Government of Kieff*, vol. i., p. 247.

(5) *Ibid.*

most four rooms lodges as many as *twelve* families, whose lives are an unbroken series of privations and pains. Whole families sometimes live on three-quarters of a pound of bread, one salt herring, and a few onions.”¹

“In the Government of Kovno,”—and in every government inhabited by the Jews—“there are families who never break their fast till night, and then only if the father and bread-winner had found work to do and has received his wage.”²

This, no doubt, is very unsavoury reading, and I inflict as little of it upon my readers as will barely suffice to enable them to form an opinion upon the Jewish question in Russia. Russian Judophobes—many members of the Government included—positively take a pleasure in these disgusting things. And yet what the object of all this persecution is—beyond the one I have already suggested—no man can tell. It is not the Jewish religion that is so unrelentingly pursued, for it is admitted even by the Orthodox Church to be superior to Mohammedanism, which enjoys toleration in Russia. Neither is it the Jewish race, for once a Jew adopts Christianity as his “faith,” he is placed on a level with born Christians. It cannot be the supposed economical influence for evil exerted by the Jews, for the same evils complained of, only in much larger dimensions, are to be found in those parts of the Empire in which a Jew never sets foot. And yet, objectless as this persecution evidently is from any reasonable point of view, not only is it warmly advocated by a portion of the press, but a fiendish delight is taken in contemplating the results. The following is a short extract from a description of Vilna, published in the *Vilna Messenger*, a Government organ, and quoted with relish by the *Noroye Vremya*:—

“All the narratives of travellers about Asiatic and African cities dwindle down to the level of the commonplace in comparison with the sights that meet your eye here; even the glorious city of Berditscheff, the very name of which is become proverbial as a synonym for dirt and rottenness, is as nothing when confronted with this pearl. . . . Glance at the Jewish Synagogue. The dirt in the courtyard is indescribable, the noise and tumult like unto that which accompanied the confusion of tongues. But the atmosphere! You should breathe it, to be able to conceive what it is like. Beside the women’s wing of the synagogue are the baths in which the sons and daughters of Israel cleanse their sinful flesh. You can judge of the internal tidiness and cleanliness of these baths by the high dunghill carefully heaped up beside the steps of the entrance.”³

But the rest of this foul essay is, at least in parts, too filthy to be given in English. Imagine the Nawab of Bengal sneering at Mr. Holwell and his twenty-two companions for the mephitic atmosphere of the Black Hole of Calcutta, and you have a parallel to the good taste and humanity of Russian Judophobes.

(1) *Description of the Government of Grodno*, vol. i., p. 858 and fol.

(2) Afanassiëff, *Description of the Government of Kovno*, pp. 582, 583.

(3) *Noroye Vremya*, 29th August, 1888.

It would be asking for a miracle to expect that men condemned, as are the Russian Jews, to rot away in forced idleness, in Augean filth, breathing air poisoned by the smell of untanned leather, and charged with the noisome exhalations of the dead and dying, to be clean, or even to be merely dirty in the ordinary acceptation of the word. What a harrowing picture of their life does not the following scene conjure up—one of the most pathetic of the tragi-comic incidents to which I alluded above? In the middle of the town of Berditscheff there is a large channel or sink in which is thrown all kinds of foul unnameable filth. One day it occurred to a police superintendent that he might have it cleaned out gratis, and he hit upon the following happy expedient: Strolling along the edge of this putrid cess-pool, he suddenly stood still and then bent anxiously over the brink, stirring up the filth with his stick. A crowd of Jews soon gathered round him, and inquired what was wrong. He replied that he had dropped a valuable ring worth £25 into the *clouca*, and he promised a reward to the finder. "In about fifteen minutes," says the journal, "all this putrescent garbage was taken out in handkerchiefs, buckets, pots, rags, &c., and brought *home* by the Jews, who scrutinised it in their courtyards, each one hopeful of finding the ring. And in this way," it concludes, "the superintendent succeeded in *cleansing that canal*." What extraordinary notions the Russian police must have of the meaning of the word sanitation!

The majority of the other charges brought against the Jews are in equal good taste. In fairness to both parties, however, it must be admitted that from one fault—or perhaps the word crime would more accurately connote it—it would be difficult to exculpate them; and this partly explains, if it does not justify, the indignation of the Russian Government. I allude to a lack of ardour, amounting at times to a positive aversion on their part, to risk their lives in the service of the Tsar, in return for the rights and protection which they enjoy in Russia. And this, in spite of the solemn oath which they all have to take, "in all things to serve and obey his Imperial Majesty, not sparing in his service my life-blood, but shedding it, ay, to the last drop,"¹ in defence of throne and beloved fatherland. This may be perjury and high treason combined, but, whatever its name and degree, many Jews² are guilty of it. And if that be a satisfactory answer to the charge of undue harshness brought against the Russian Government, there is an end to the matter. At the same time one fails to understand why the Government, which taunts the Jews with being cowards, takes more pains to draw or drive them into the Russian army than if they were so many

(1) Supplement to art. 1061 (1886).

(2) The percentage of Jews who neglect to present themselves for military service, or afterwards desert, is larger than that of the Christians—but the difference is not considerable.

Hectors and Achilles. Lest a Jew follow what is supposed to be the bent of his inclination and shirk his "sacred duty to his Little Father the Tsar and his dear Fatherland," his personal appearance must be minutely described in his passport in much greater detail than if he were a Christian. Thus every pimple, mole, malformation, and other mark by which he may be identified is to be clearly mentioned!¹ If the medical commission declare him unfit for service, and the authorities entertain a well-founded or absurd suspicion that he himself deliberately contributed to bring about this unfitness, he is received into the army in spite of his physical defects, and told off for special service.² If, when called upon, a Jew fails to present himself to the military commission whose business it is to accept or reject him, he is not imprisoned, for this would be no punishment to a man whose life is a crownless martyrdom, but heavily fined. This may be a just and certain method of engrafting that love of Fatherland and Little Father which neither their feelings nor their reason have been able to evoke, but it seems needlessly harsh to inflict upon the hard-working old parents of the defaulter a fine of £50 besides; and this is exactly what the law does.³ But many young men are orphans at this age, or their parents are literally beggars, so that, not possessing a copper coin, they have no fear of the penalties. Such youths ingeniously turn the law to account, and compel it to yield them and their relations a slight profit. They run away from the parish or city in which the commission holds its sittings, and are declared fugitives. For all such deserters—if only they be Jews—a reward of fifty roubles is always liberally paid. A friend of the runaway is informed by the delinquent himself of his whereabouts, he communicates the information to the authorities and receives the reward, which he gives in part or in its entirety to the offender.

In this manner many of the Russian laws against the Jewish population either defeat their own purpose or inflict considerable loss upon the Christian subjects of the Tsar. Thus there are numerous districts in Russia—fertile stretches of land which are in sore need of workmen to till the soil or reap its fruits. It often happens that the corn rots on the ground for want of hands to cut it. The landowners have been for years crying out for some measure calculated to restore what the emancipation of the serfs deprived them of—cheap labour; and the Government did enact a law a few years ago, which has created a class of agricultural labourers who sell themselves for several years, and even descend to the heirs of their master, should he die before the expiration of their term. But this

(1) Military Law of 1886. Explanation of Article 8.

(2) Explanation of Article 40.

(3) Article 350 of the Military Law

measure has not brought the looked-for relief to Russian landowners, who are often driven to despair at the sight of their riches melting away like snow for want of labourers, while the miserable Jews are perishing of sheer starvation, almost devouring each other, like Ugolino's offspring in the tower of the Gualandi, because there is no work for them to do in the Pale. These hungry wretches are then accused by sleek, over-fed ministers in their warm drawing-rooms, of a disposition to outreach the Russian peasant whenever they have a chance. The accusation, it is to be feared, is not wholly groundless, for Jews belong to the genus animal no less than to the species man, and the instinct of self-proservation is as strongly developed within them when their rival is a Russian as if he were only a vile Jew, like themselves. Men of mild, amiable disposition, tossed about in an open boat on the ocean for a week or ten days, and tortured by the pangs of hunger and thirst, have even been known to harbour wicked thoughts of cannibalism, which the children of Israel in Russia have not yet been known to entertain.

I am personally acquainted with a rich Jew in a flourishing provincial city who is compelled to pay in bribes to the authorities a sum that would support half the Jews of Berditscheff. He raises the necessary amount by imposing an illegal supplementary tax on all *kosher* food sold by him to his co-religionists. His arrangements with the police enable him not only to do this with impunity, but likewise to have all his competitors removed from the city "administratively," that is, by an order issued by the police, without rhyme or reason. These "administrative" orders are much more demoralising than the *lettres de cachet* of the French monarchy, because much more easily obtained. If a Christian have an obliging friend in the police administration, he can treat many Jews of the lower classes just as if they were serfs. I knew a respectable young girl of very honest parents privileged to live in one of the capital cities. A Christian "fell in love" with her, and under pretext of giving her lessons and preparing her for admission to one of the high schools, seduced her, solemnly promising marriage. I heard her once ask him to marry her, and I also heard him reply that he would have her sent out of the city in twenty-four hours for her presumption. And he did. A cousin of his is serving in the police department, and he had no difficulty to obtain an order for her banishment "as a disorderly Jewess." "But how could you bring yourself to do such a damnable act?" I asked. "Oh, she is only a Jewess," he answered. "What else is she good for. Besides, everybody does the same."¹

(1) At present a Jew can be sent out of the city on the ground that he has been *impolite* in the street or in a crowd. And this law has been made by a Governor whose politeness is shown by kicks and cuffs and blasphemous oaths, as the whole south of Russia is well aware.

Yes ; everybody does the same, and the lives of six million people whose instincts, aptitudes, and moral sense place them on a much higher level than their Christian fellow subjects, are thus made literally unendurable. Scoffed at, terrorised, and robbed by every petty official with that certain impunity which invites to crime ; insulted, beaten, and kept in constant fear of violence by a vile rabble whom they dare not irritate by even a slight success in business or trade, held up to the scorn and indignation of all Russia by the Governmental press as the authors of every calamity avoidable and unavoidable ;¹ education and instruction denied them, the learned professions and higher branch of the profession of arms closed to them ; trade and commerce rendered very difficult by intolerable taxes and endless restrictions, and *wholly impossible without bribery and fraud* ; their personal liberty now at last completely taken away from them ; their religion proscribed, and their very souls killed by the perjury with which they are forced to blacken it, Russian Jews may well defy their persecutors to frame any further laws calculated to make their position worse than it is.

Surely English journalists and politicians carried distrust too far when they doubted the solemn assurances of the Russian Government that no more stringent laws were in contemplation at present, just as the American coroner's jury, finding a paper with the words, " I have killed myself," on the corpse of an inveterate liar, brought in a verdict that he was not dead at all. Still, it is to be regretted that the monster meeting which the Lord Mayor of London was to have convened was not held, as it might have led to some beneficial results ; not, of course, by passing impotent resolutions of indignation, which would have had as much effect on the Russian Government as dewdrops on a goose's back, but by respectfully petitioning his Imperial Majesty—as a daily paper lately suggested—to commute in his clemency the present unbearable sufferings to which the law condemns six millions of men and women for worshipping God as Christ did—for painless death by electricity or poison.

E. B. LANE.

(1) Cf. *Novaya Vremya*, which published a long article at the time of the accident to the Tsar's train at Borki to show that the danger of sudden death had been brought about by the Jews, while his escape was miraculous and actually foretold by one of the minor Hebrew prophets, who, when read aright, mentions him by name. This same enlightened organ, the most extensively circulated in Russia, also countenanced the fable that the Jews periodically murder a Christian child, whose blood they require for their ceremonies.

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